



# RESEARCH REPORT

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Catalog number	99-013
Date:	September 23, 1999
Subject:	Sheriff's Office - District Detectives Staffing
To:	Board of Supervisors
From:	Sandi Wilson, Deputy County Administrator
Prepared By:	Don Colvin, Budget Analyst

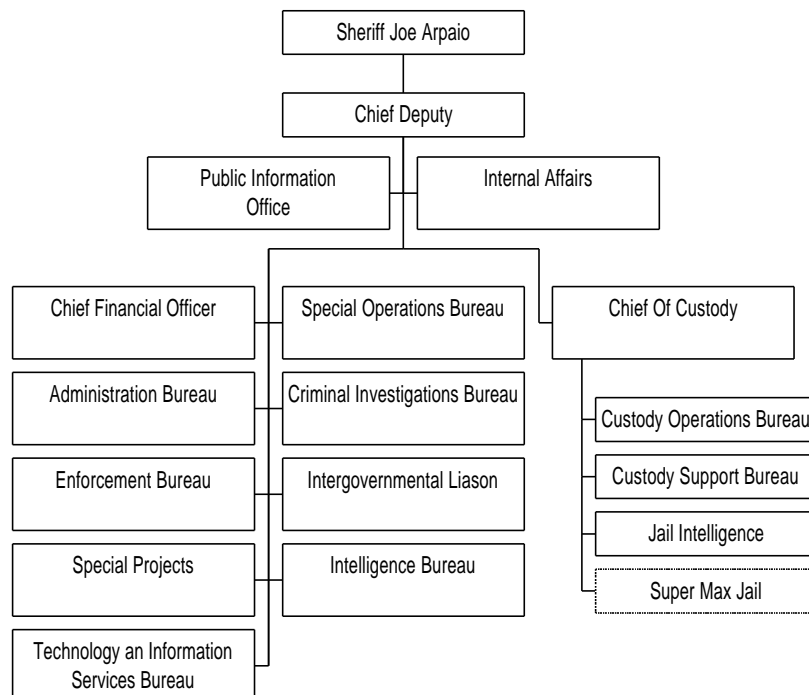
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## Issue

To evaluate the need for additional District Detectives in order to reduce the average caseload per District Detective and to reduce the case backlog.

## Background

The Maricopa County Sheriff's Office receives its authority from ARS 11-441 and related statutes, "Authority and duty of the Sheriff." The function of the Sheriff is to provide law enforcement services, detention services and services to the Superior Court. This can range from patrolling incorporated and unincorporated areas, patrolling recreation areas within Maricopa County, incarceration of all inmates assigned to the Sheriff by the Court, as well as the serving of subpoenas, civil processes, warrants, and extraditions.

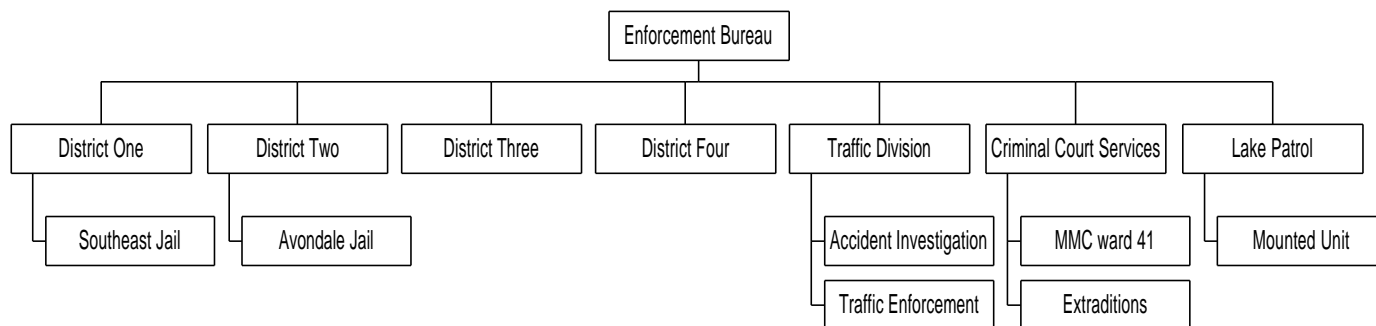


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The Enforcement Program is mandated by ARS 11-441 to provide protection and law enforcement services to the general populace of Maricopa County and to the citizens of contract cities. The services to the public include the protection of life and property, investigation of crimes and motor vehicle accidents, service of civil process and preliminary search and rescue operations. The personnel within the bureau respond to all requests for assistance from citizens or other people within our area of responsibility -- including areas of recreational lakes and rivers. The Lake Patrol Division performs more in depth search and rescue operations due to their specialized equipment as well as being our first responders to major incidents such as riots, floods, train derailments, Palo Verde Nuclear Plant incidents and other emergency situations.

Each District has a number of detectives assigned to investigate crime in their respective areas. The various District Commanders report to the Enforcement Bureau Commander as outlined in the organization chart below.



**District I** - Southeast - serves the areas of east Mesa, Chandler Heights, Sun Lakes, Higley, and the contract cities of Guadalupe and Queen Creek. The geographic area consists of approximately 1,053 square miles and has a population of about 70,000. There are six detectives and one detective sergeant assigned.

**District II** - Southwest - serves the areas of Laveen, Santa Maria, Buckeye, Arlington, Harquahala Valley, and the contract city of Gila Bend. The geographic area consists of approximately 5,200 square miles, has a population of 45,000. There are 5 detectives and a sergeant assigned to this district.

**District III** - Northwest - serves the areas of Sun City, Sun City West, Wittmann, Wickenburg, and Aguila. The geographic area consists of approximately 1,677 square miles, has a population of 68,000 and is currently serviced by five detectives and one detective sergeant.

**District IV** - North - serves the areas of New River, Rio Verde, parts of Paradise Valley and the contract cities of Cave Creek and Carefree. There are three detectives and one detective sergeant assigned to this district.

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**District IV** - South - serves the contract city of Fountain Hills and surrounding areas. Combined District IV North and South consist of approximately 1,300 square miles and a population of 28,000. There are two detectives and one detective sergeant assigned to District IV - South.

**Lake Patrol** - Lakes and rivers - serves the recreational areas of Saguaro Lake, Canyon Lake, Apache Lake, Lake Pleasant, Bartlett Lake, Horseshoe Lake and the vast stretches along the Salt River and Verde River. This division also responds to all wilderness areas in the Mazatzal Mountains, Four Peaks Mountain and the Superstition Mountain range. This geographic area consists of approximately 1000 square miles, serves a large population of recreation users and is serviced by 40 personnel of which 29 are deputies. There are two detectives in Lake Patrol.

In addition to the detectives assigned to the Enforcement Bureau, there are detectives assigned to the General Investigations Division (GID) and the Special Investigations Division (SID), both under the Criminal Investigation Bureau. GID is responsible for the investigations of homicides, missing persons, vehicular crimes, arson, and jail crimes. SID is responsible for the investigation of drug and violent gang related crimes. The district detectives will refer these types of crimes to GID and SID as appropriate. District detectives handle all other types of crimes. For example a district detective's case load may include everything from assaults, criminal property damage, domestic violence cases, and illegal dumping to missing persons and death investigations. The organizational relationship between the various detective groups is shown in the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) organization chart on page one.

## **Discussion**

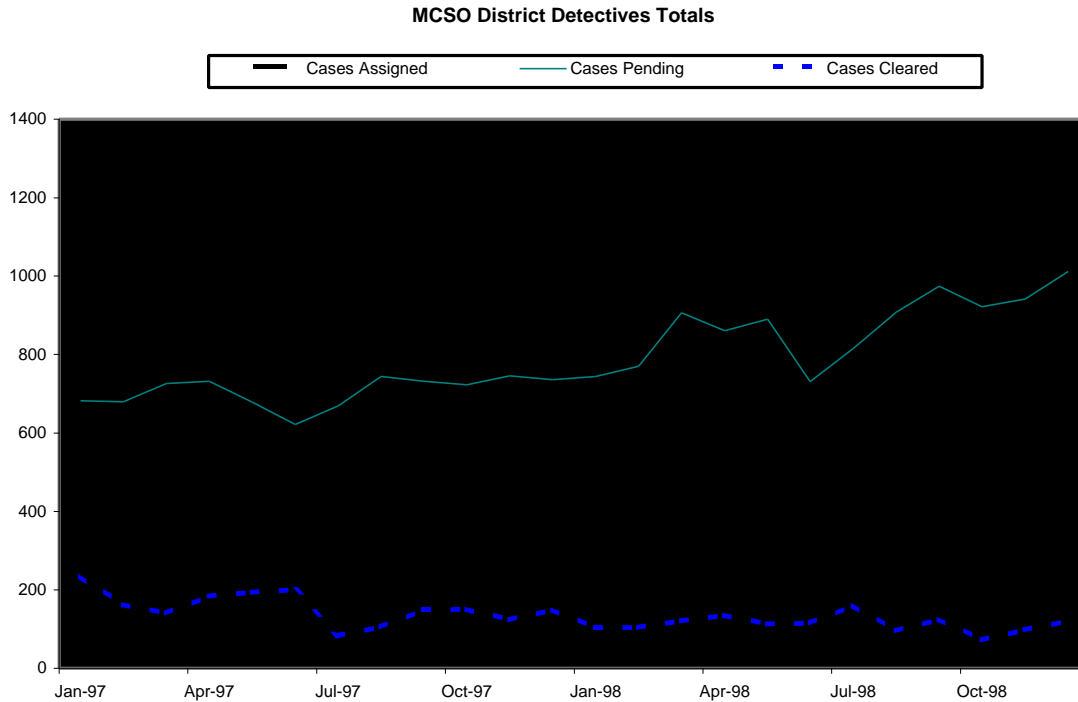
In the Sheriff's Office memo from Enforcement Bureau Chief Black dated March 11,1999 which outlined their initial request for an increase in District Detective staffing levels, the Sheriff's Office cited the heavy average caseload per detective and the increasing backlog as justification for the additional detectives. According to the memo, due to that heavy workload and backlog some cases weren't being investigated in a timely manner and many of the older cases were not investigated at all. As a result the Sheriff's Office effectiveness is reduced and the number of citizen complaints has increased, primarily from crime victims who were frustrated about the lack of activity in their cases.

Reliable Enforcement Bureau District detective statistical information figures provided by MCSO covers only calendar years 1997 and 1998. For part of that time District 4 figures are not included due to computer program difficulties with the information tracking system. Our discussion and conclusions are based on the data that was available for analysis.

Figure 1 illustrates the increase in number of cases pending and carried over from month-to-month. The MCSO memo gave the following reasons for the increased caseload/backlog:

- Lengthy investigations
- Normal staff vacations
- Training
- Detective beats too large

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**FIGURE 1**

- As shown in Figure 1, the number of cases pending (backlogged) has increased from 682 in January of 1997 to 1012 in December 1998, an increase of 33%. During this same time frame however, the number of new cases assigned per month has remained relatively flat. At the same time, the total number of cases cleared per month has actually shown a slight decrease.
- There was an especially large decrease in cases cleared and percentage of cases cleared (see Figure 2) in July and August 1997. It is about the same time frame that the cases pending (backlog) started to increase. Overall, the Enforcement Bureau District Detectives average was 135 cases cleared per month or 5.6 cases per detective during 1997 and 1998.
- Information provided by MCSO indicates that changes in the law (A.R.S. §13-3601.B) requires more stringent investigative protocols in order for the County Attorney to effectively prosecute cases involving domestic violence, child abuse, and sexual abuse crimes. Among these new protocols which add to the investigative workload include tape recorded interviews of victims and witnesses, photographs of victims injuries in abuse cases, and more follow-up on all these types of cases. In cases of domestic violence, the assigned detective is required to call their supervisor to the scene, which greatly increases the time and number of investigators involved. As mentioned earlier, specific statistics on the length of time it takes to clear a case have not been universally kept.

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- In his May 6, 1998 memo on detective staffing levels in District II, Sgt. Keith Moore calculated the average clearance times for District II detectives only. According to his data, sixty-four percent (64%) of non-in custody cases took over thirty days to clear. Thirty-three percent took over ninety days.
- Cases can be cleared in one of three different ways: by **exception**, **arrest** or **unfounded**. Cleared by exception means that it is known who committed the crime but the individual will not be prosecuted for that crime. This could be for a variety of reasons. For example, the victim refuses to press charges, the suspect is found guilty of a more serious crime in another jurisdiction, or the individual dies prior to his arrest. Cleared by arrest means the suspect is in custody or the County Attorney has filed criminal charges against them. Unfounded means that the allegations were untrue or no crime was committed.

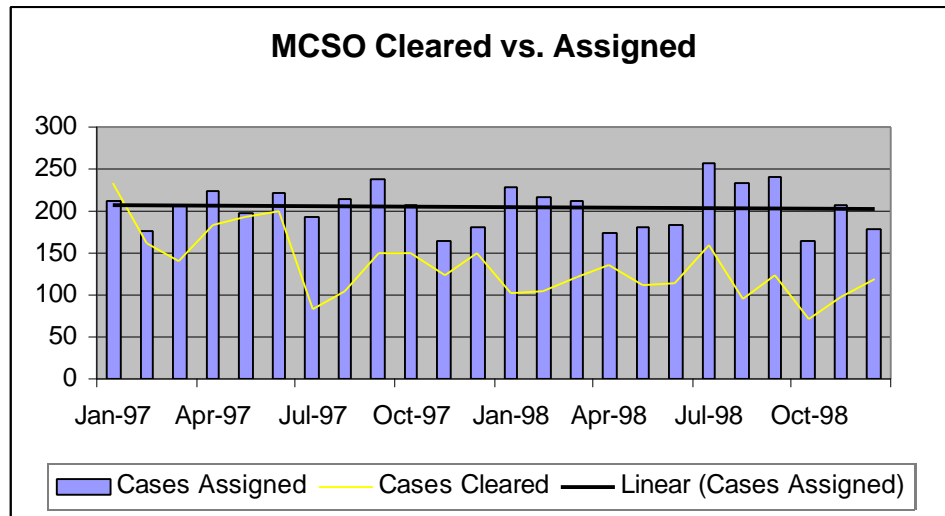


FIGURE 2

- MCSO District Detectives percentage of cases cleared dropped from 12.9% in 1997 to 10.3% in 1998. Clearance rates for 1997-1998 are shown in Figure 2.
- Investigative protocols required by the County Attorney for domestic violence, child abuse, and sexual abuse cases now require detectives to tape record interviews and photograph victims of these types of crimes.
- Trendline indicates number of cases assigned has remained the same of the same period. This indicates no correlation between number of cases assigned and number of cases cleared.

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- The District detectives training hours versus cases cleared for January 1997 - June 1998 are shown graphically in Figure 3.

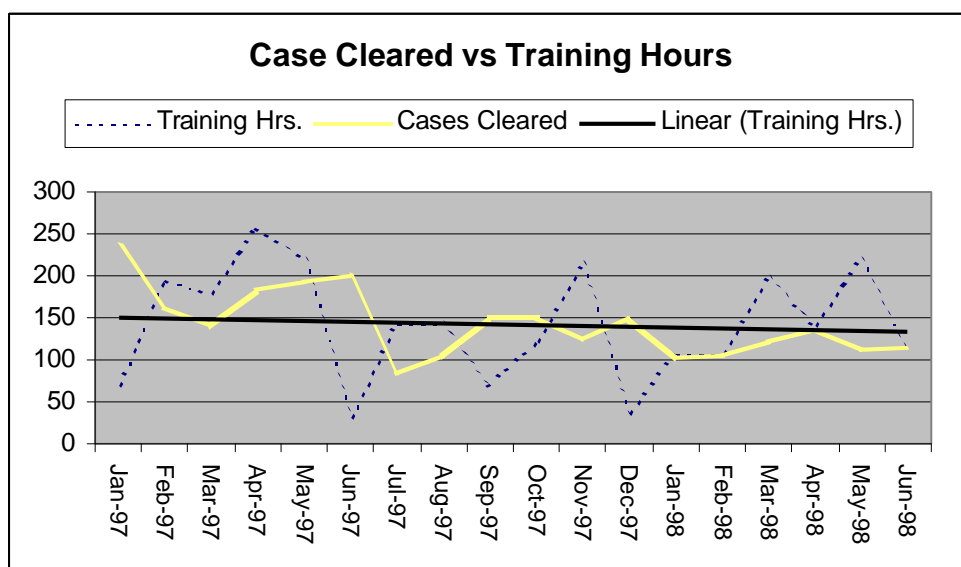


FIGURE 3

- There is no mandatory set training regime designed and mandated specifically for the training of district detectives. However, detective courses are available through the Maricopa Community Colleges, and tuition reimbursement is available for those officers who take these classes. Additionally, all officers complete some detective training as part of their initial academy coursework. The number of training hours spent district wide rises and falls as various training classes are offered or mandated.
- The number of hours in training and number of cases cleared both show a **decreasing** trend line, however if the number of training hours negatively effected the number of cases cleared the number of hours would **increase** as cases cleared decreased. This suggests that there is no correlation to the number of hours spent in training to the number of cases cleared.

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- The physical size of the beats has remained unchanged. The amount of territory each detective is responsible for is considerable. This varies from district to district but those detectives, whose beats cover less physical distance, generally have a heavier population concentration. As areas of the county become incorporated or annexed by the cities and towns the physical dimensions of the patrol areas may change. However, the Sheriff's Office is still responsible for investigations in many incorporated areas via law enforcement contracts. As discussed earlier, the total number of cases received and assigned has **not** increased significantly over the last 2 years (see Figure 1).

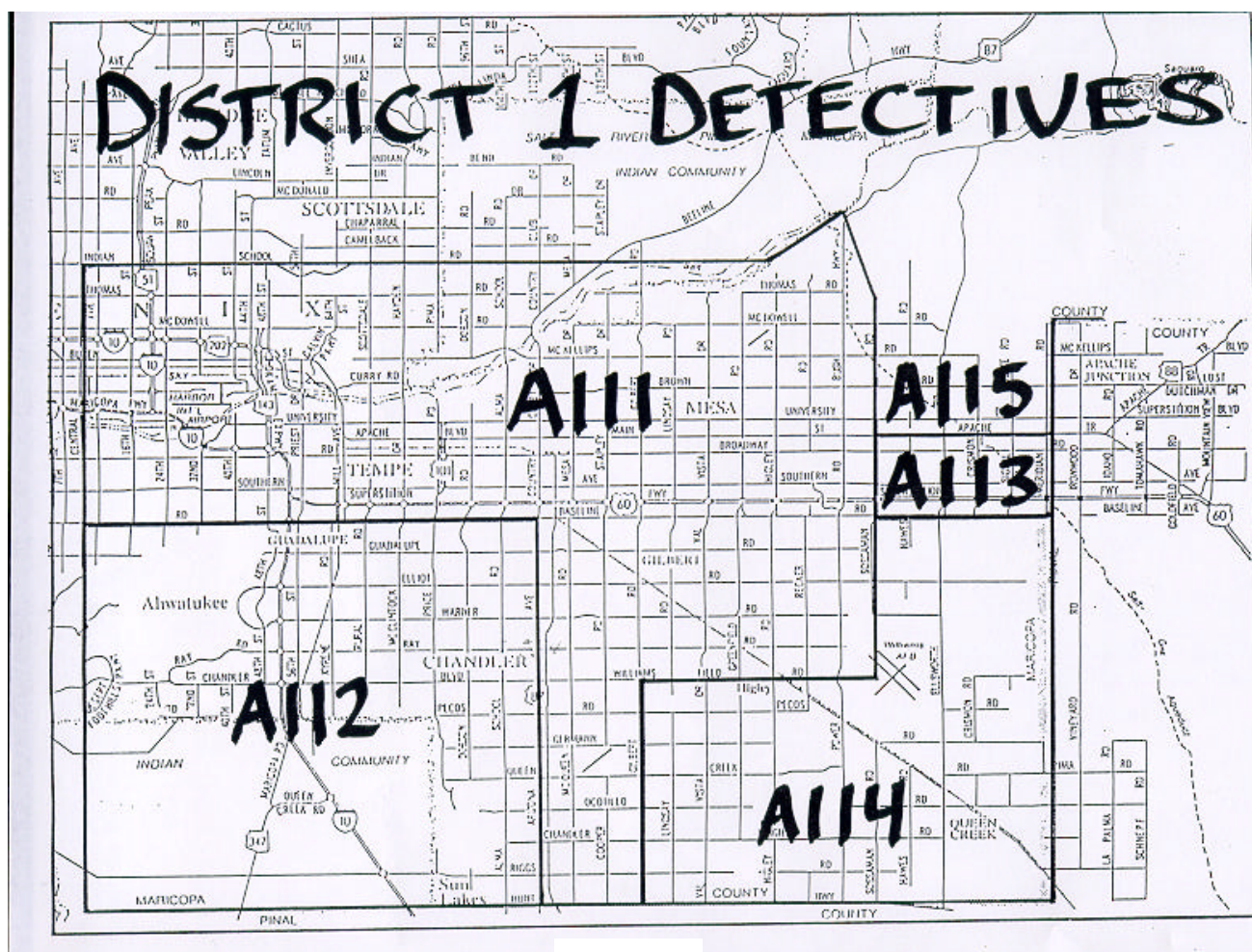
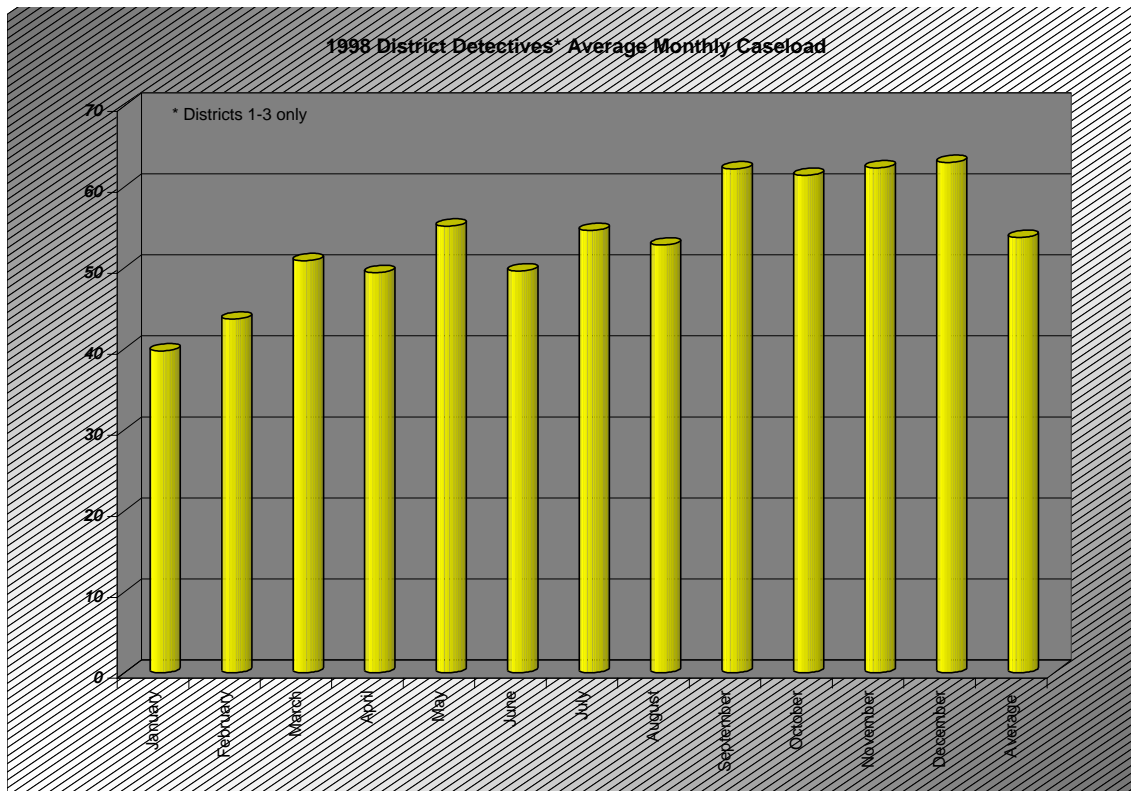


FIGURE 4

- The map above (Figure 4) shows the beat areas for District I. District I covers 1,053 square miles, an average of 210 square miles per detective beat. District 1 is closest to the median size of all the districts
- Because of the large areas to be covered and the amount of follow-up that needs to be done a car should be included for each detective that is added.



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**Figure 5**

- As shown in Figure 5, the average monthly caseload per detective increased significantly in 1998. The number of cases increased from an average of 39 in January to 63 in December. It should be noted that these figures represent only Districts I-III, which are the 3 busiest districts.
- By way of comparison the City of Chandler Police Department detectives' average caseload is about 20 per detective. For the City of Phoenix Police Department the average detective caseload in 1997 and 1998 for aggravated assaults was 27 cases per month. Their average caseload during the same time period for domestic violence cases was 79 per detective per month. Because each case is unique the average number of cases alone does not provide a true picture of the actual workload or the effectiveness of each detective.
- As demonstrated in Figures 1-3, the number of cases assigned has not increased, but the clearance rate has decreased, which results in more cases being carried over. As mentioned earlier in this report, this trend jumped sharply in July and August of 1997.

## Conclusion

- The number of cases pending (backlogged) has increased in the last two years.
- The number of cases assigned has remained the same.

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- The number of cases cleared and clearance percentages have decreased. However it has been validated that the investigative protocols now required for domestic violence, sexual abuse, and child abuse take more time to investigate.
- Increasing the number of hours in training will not reduce number of cases cleared.
- Adding 5 detectives while maintaining the same clearance rate will clear an additional 28 cases per month. Adding 10 detectives will clear 191 total cases per month. This brings the level back up to about the average number of cases cleared in early 1997.
- Adding more and more detectives **alone** will not solve the backlog problem. Adding 5 additional detectives will reduce the monthly backlog only by an average of 7 cases per detective district wide. It is cost prohibitive to add enough detectives to completely eliminate the backlog. Each deputy cost about \$33,612 per year plus each car cost \$25,817.

### Recommendation

- The narrow focus of this report was to make a recommendation on the Sheriff's Office request for 5 additional detectives and cars for those detectives. Recommend that 10 detectives and vehicles be approved. The Sheriff's Office has acquired grant funding for the detective positions, therefore OMB is recommending funding for the vehicles alone.
- Although this action alone will not eliminate the backlog problem it **will** help solve additional cases, and help reduce the number of backlogged cases. Because the largest backlogs exist in Districts I and III recommend that additional detectives be added to those districts first. Recommend the other additional detectives be assigned to Districts II and IV.
- In addition to increasing the number of detectives assigned to decrease the case backlog, steps should be taken to help the detectives to improve their ability to solve cases. Total current year cost of these additional vehicles is \$312,170.

The breakdown of those cost is as follows:

Description	FY 99/00 Costs
10 Vehicles Purchase \$	<b>258,178</b>
800 Mz Radio	<b>34,782</b>
Strobe Lights	<b>10,560</b>
Siren	<b>7,000</b>
Window Tint	<b>650</b>
Misc. Supplies	<b>1,000</b>
<b>Total Equipment Costs</b>	<b>312,170</b>

- Recommend a more in depth study on policies and practices be done to review detectives policies and practices with an eye toward increasing district detectives effectiveness.
- **Improve Training:** District detectives do not currently have a formal training program. A formal training program should be established that includes curriculum on investigative techniques and procedure that detectives should attend within 90 days of being assigned to detectives.

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- **Performance Measures:** Setting and promulgating meaningful and measurable goals have shown to have a positive influence on overall effectiveness. <sup>1</sup>Some suggested goals are:

Contact 100% of victims within 3 days.

Close 10% of cases within 30 days.

Close 20% of cases within 60 days

Close 50% of cases within 90 days

Clear 25% of all cases

Clear 10 cases per detective per month.

100% attend basic investigation class with 6 months of assignment to detectives

These goals were meant as suggestions or guidelines only.

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<sup>1</sup> These performance measures are those used by the City of Chandler Police Department.